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<p>The long-simmering dispute between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) over the status of Taiwan is widely regarded to be the most likely flashpoint for East Asian conflict. Given the likelihood U.S. forces will be involved in military operations in defense of Taiwan, a thorough analysis of potential operational factors is necessary and prudent. A critical element of this analysis will be the level of support that U.S. and Taiwanese forces will expect to receive from Japan.</p> <p>Although increasing the degree of Japanese involvement in the defense of Taiwan will offer corresponding advantages at the tactical and operational levels of warfare, at the theater-strategic level there is a point of diminishing returns beyond which Japanese help could ultimately become a hindrance to U.S. interests throughout East Asia. Limiting Japanese involvement to a strategically acceptable level should be a critical factor in operational planning. U.S. planning for Taiwanese defense should focus on maximizing the benefits of limited Japanese support, diversifying U.S. presence and influence throughout the region, and minimizing the chances of crisis escalation and destabilization.</p>					
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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, RI**

**AVOIDING A SAKE HANGOVER: SCALING JAPANESE  
INVOLVEMENT IN A TAIWAN STRAIT CONFLICT**

**By**

**David J. Appezzato  
Lieutenant Commander, USN**

**A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**14 February 2005**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. Bruce Elleman  
Maritime History Department**

## **Abstract**

The long-simmering dispute between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) over the status of Taiwan is widely regarded to be the most likely flashpoint for East Asian conflict. Given the likelihood U.S. forces will be involved in military operations in defense of Taiwan, a thorough analysis of potential operational factors is necessary and prudent. A critical element of this analysis will be the level of support that U.S. and Taiwanese forces will expect to receive from Japan.

Although increasing the degree of Japanese involvement in the defense of Taiwan will offer corresponding advantages at the tactical and operational levels of warfare, at the theater-strategic level there is a point of diminishing returns beyond which Japanese help could ultimately become a hindrance to U.S. interests throughout East Asia. Limiting Japanese involvement to a strategically acceptable level should be a critical factor in operational planning. U.S. planning for Taiwanese defense should focus on maximizing the benefits of limited Japanese support, diversifying U.S. presence and influence throughout the region, and minimizing the chances of crisis escalation and destabilization.

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## **I. Introduction**

Excluding the renegade regime in North Korea, the long-simmering dispute between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) over the status of Taiwan is widely regarded to be the most likely flashpoint for East Asian conflict.<sup>1</sup> A complex web of political, economic, military and historical factors continues to fuel a decades-old crisis that has defied resolution. Given the likelihood U.S. forces will be involved in military operations in defense of Taiwan, a thorough analysis of potential operational factors is necessary and prudent. A critical element of this analysis will be the level of support that U.S. and Taiwanese forces will expect to receive from Japan.

This paper will show that although increasing the degree of Japanese involvement in the defense of Taiwan will offer corresponding advantages at the tactical and operational levels of warfare, at the theater-strategic level there is a point of diminishing returns beyond which Japanese help could ultimately become a hindrance to U.S. interests throughout East Asia. The impact of Japanese involvement in a Taiwan Strait confrontation is analogous to the sliding weights on an upright scale. As the weights are moved across the lever arm, they counter the force applied to the scale until it is balanced. Beyond this point the force of the weights becomes excessive, and the scale is once again out of balance. Limiting Japanese involvement to a strategically acceptable level should be a critical factor in operational planning. At the same time, the capability of U.S. forces to address an impending Taiwanese crisis must be optimized.

The December 2004 revision of Japan's National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), the first in nearly 10 years, is significant. For the first time since World War II, the Japanese Government has recognized China as a potential threat to its national security.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore,

the 1997 U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines, an agreement which dictates the areas of mutual security assistance cooperation, states that Japan will assist the U.S. militarily by participating in blockades of other nations and minesweeping operations in the event of “situations that arise in the area surrounding Japan.”<sup>3</sup> This vague language is directed at North Korea, but also has been interpreted to include the Taiwan Strait area.

The amount of assistance that Japan could offer U.S. and ROC armed forces in the event of an armed conflict in the Taiwan Strait would be commensurate with the extent of its involvement. Full Japanese involvement in the crisis would undoubtedly include significant combat power in the form of the well-equipped and modern Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF). In recent years the Japanese Government, with U.S. encouragement, has shown a slowly increasing willingness to employ these forces for purposes beyond mere territorial self-defense. Should Japan limit itself to a lesser degree of involvement in the crisis, it could still offer more indirect forms of assistance, including an important intelligence collection and analysis capability, access to key forward bases, and critical logistic support.

### Assumptions

The complexity of the Taiwanese dispute places a comprehensive analysis far beyond the scope of this paper. To appropriately scale the topic, the following assumptions have been made:

1. The PRC will not relinquish its claim to ownership of Taiwan, and the ROC will continue its gradual movement towards full independence. If these two statements are accepted as fact, it can be concluded that the dispute between the two governments will not be resolved short of military confrontation.\*

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\* Support for this assumption is drawn from numerous sources. An analysis of Taiwan’s trend towards democracy and independence can be found in Denny Roy, “Returning Home or Selling Out?” in [Asia’s China](#)

2. It is assumed that the defense of Taiwanese independence remains a crucial US national interest; therefore, U.S. forces will be participants in the upcoming conflict. Some elements of U.S. national interest in the Taiwan dispute include the advocacy of efforts to establish democratic governments around the world, and the requirement to reaffirm U.S. standing among Asian nations by honoring a decades-old commitment to a regional ally.<sup>†</sup>

3. The Chinese value the principle of surprise as a method of mitigating U.S. technological superiority. A surprise attack would allow PRC forces to seize the initiative, primarily by eliminating the ability of U.S. forces to respond effectively in a timely manner and potentially removing them from the battle until it is already decided.<sup>‡</sup> It is therefore assumed that PRC military operations against the ROC would take the form of a surprise attack, preceded by protracted disinformation and deception operations.

## **II. Japanese Capabilities**

Japan could offer a wide range of military support to U.S. and ROC forces as they defend against a Chinese attack. On the heavier side of the scale, Japan could commit JSDF units to combat operations against Chinese forces. In addition to combat power, there are three areas located on the lighter side of the scale - intelligence support, forward basing, and logistical support - where indirect assistance and cooperation from Japan could provide

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Debate, ed. Dr. Satu Limaye (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, December 2003). A discussion of China's commitment to reclaiming Taiwan is in Michael D. Swaine, "Trouble in Taiwan," Foreign Affairs 83 no. 2 (March/April 2004): 39, UMI-Proquest, 16 December 2004. A discussion of the inevitability of war between the PRC and ROC is in Richard C. Bush, At Cross Purposes, (Armonk, NY: East Gate Books, 2004): 243-4.

<sup>†</sup> A discussion of U.S. interests with regard to Taiwan is in Douglas McCready, Crisis Deterrence in the Taiwan Strait (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, November 2003). Also see John F. Copper, "U.S.-Taiwan-China Relations," Vital Speeches of the Day 65 no. 16 (01 June 1999): 485 (3 pages), UMI-Proquest, [03 December 2004].

<sup>‡</sup> One of many discussions is in Richard L. Russell, "What if...China Attacks Taiwan!," Parameters 31 no. 3 (Autumn, 2001): 76 (16 pages), UMI-Proquest, [16 December 2004].

significant advantages to friendly forces while minimizing the potential negative effects of direct Japanese military involvement.

### Combat Power

Japan could commit JSDF units to operations in support of Taiwanese defense. Surprisingly Japan, whose constitution outlaws war, maintains in many respects the most powerful military in East Asia, including arguably the world's fourth most powerful air force and second most powerful navy.<sup>4</sup> Japanese units could substantially augment U.S. and Taiwanese combat power, and do so from an advantageous position with respect to time and space.

The Japanese Maritime (JMSDF) and Air (JASDF) Self-Defense Forces are especially well-equipped and proficient in sea control and air defense missions.<sup>5</sup> JMSDF capabilities are concentrated around 40 modern missile destroyers and 16 submarines, supported by frigates, 80 P-3 Orion long-range patrol aircraft, and a credible amphibious capability.<sup>6</sup> The primary capability of the JASDF lies in 130 F-15J fighters, supported by 70 older F-4's and controlled by E-2 and E-767 Airborne Command and Control platforms.<sup>7</sup> Ground forces, while slightly less capable than their air and naval counterparts, still boast over 1,000 main battle tanks and over 600 towed and self-propelled artillery pieces, as well as 90 attack helicopters.<sup>8</sup>

The U.S. and Japan are also cooperating in the development of Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (TBMD) technology that will markedly enhance the JSDF's air defense capabilities.<sup>9</sup> In addition to their significant combat power, JSDF units have the advantage of geographic proximity, and could be deployed virtually within hours of the commencement of hostilities.



## Intelligence Support

Japan's proximity and interrelationships with both China and Taiwan can provide a wealth of intelligence information to both planners and forces in the field. The likelihood of a PRC surprise attack against Taiwan places a premium on intelligence collection and analysis.

Japan has developed a "relatively flawless surveillance system for the East China Sea Area" that has robust theater intelligence collection capabilities, including the tracking of surface, subsurface and air units in the maritime environment as well as collecting and reporting on the activities of land-based units along the Chinese coast.<sup>10</sup> In addition to shore based radar assets and surface ships on routine patrols, the JMSDF's large force of P-3C aircraft are ideal Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms that could offer critical assistance in tracking submarines and surface contacts without becoming directly involved in combat operations. At the theater/strategic level, the nascent Japanese satellite imagery capability will likely be optimized for regional collection, providing critical augmentation to overtasked U.S. systems.

The Araki Report, an October 2004 defense policy white paper commissioned by Prime Minister Koizumi, recognizes the possibility of the Taiwan-China conflict. It advocates greater cooperation with the U.S. to assist in deterrence and "[Respond] to situations surrounding Japan that have an important influence on Japan's peace and security...in order to prevent the threat from affecting Japan."<sup>11</sup> In calling for enhancements to Japan's already robust intelligence network, the report is specific about the need to expand collection and analysis capabilities within the JSDF and government, and improve the rules for regulating information security.<sup>12</sup>

U.S. commanders should be prepared to take full advantage of this Japanese initiative. Japanese intelligence collection and analysis can provide regional experience, proximity, and context to intelligence products. It can also relieve some of the burden on U.S. intelligence agencies, whose ability to focus their efforts is hampered by the need to monitor other global “hot spots.” Japanese intelligence assistance can to a great degree be provided covertly, limiting the danger of escalating a cross-strait conflict.

Japanese intelligence agencies already appear to have a close working relationship with their Taiwanese counterparts. A November 2004 incident involving the incursion of a PRC submarine into Japanese waters displayed evidence that Taiwan and Japan are cooperating on intelligence collection.<sup>13</sup> Stricter Japanese information security will also make cooperation with U.S. agencies easier and more effective at all levels, providing focus and unity of effort for collection activities.<sup>14</sup>

#### Forward Bases

Japan is the most obvious source of forward bases for U.S. forces defending Taiwan, although there are long-standing political issues surrounding their use. The probability of a Chinese surprise attack on Taiwan makes it imperative that the timeline for crisis response be kept to an absolute minimum, placing a premium on available forward bases of operations. Despite public protests against U.S. presence, the 1997 U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines commit Japan to allowing U.S. forces use of military and civilian bases and ports.<sup>15</sup>

There is a strong U.S. presence at major bases in Japan. U.S. forces include the Forward-Deployed Naval Force (FDNF) centered on the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63), a 20,000-strong Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in Okinawa, and over 80 F-15 and F-16 fighters, as well as refueling aircraft and regional airlift assets.<sup>16</sup> These forces form

the critical first line of defense for U.S. interests in East Asia. Recently the U.S. has sought and obtained additional access to operationally important civilian airfields located on various Okinawan islands.<sup>17</sup> The only significant Japanese territory within 500 nautical miles of Taiwan, Okinawa is critical to the ability to project airpower over the Taiwan Strait.<sup>18</sup>

### Logistic Support

Japanese ports and shipping assets could mitigate logistic challenges by providing a substantial source of resupply for U.S. and Taiwanese forces in East Asia. Logistic support, critical to any military operation, is especially important for U.S. forces engaged in Taiwanese operations. PRC forces will enjoy logistic and geographic advantages, while U.S. forces face significant challenges with respect to the factors of space and time.

According to the 1997 U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines, the Japanese have committed to supplying U.S. forces with food and fuel in the event of an East Asian crisis.<sup>19</sup> The Japanese currently pay approximately \$5 billion yearly to help fund the forward U.S. presence in Japan.<sup>20</sup> Well-equipped Japanese ports such as Yokosuka offer complete support for U.S. ships as large as an aircraft carrier.

The large Japanese merchant fleet could also be used to resupply U.S. and Taiwanese forces on the Taiwanese mainland. This assistance could potentially help to defeat a Chinese effort to blockade Taiwan. Depending on the type of ship and the route taken, supply ships from Japan could realistically reach Taiwan in less than 24 hours.<sup>21</sup>

Japan can supply an extensive range of military capabilities and assistance in the event of a Taiwanese crisis. Japanese involvement is thus very attractive at the operational level of warfare. The analysis is not complete, however. U.S. planning should also take into account the long-term regional and international implications of Japanese involvement.

### **III. Limiting the Japanese Role**

Japan is currently in transition from its cold war status as pacifist economic powerhouse and bilateral U.S. ally to a more independent and engaged country that exercises greater political and military involvement in the international arena. The influential Japanese politician Ichiro Ozawa popularized this transition as Japan's metamorphosis into a "normal nation."<sup>22</sup> The U.S., seeking partners with which to share the global security burden, has played an active role in encouraging this transformation, but has often been frustrated by progress that has been characterized as "glacial."<sup>23</sup> The issue of Taiwanese defense is no exception. It is a mistake to assume that full-fledged Japanese support for the defense of Taiwan can be guaranteed:

The danger lies in misreading Japan's willingness to shoulder the risks of collective defense in the event of a full-blown military crisis on the Korean peninsula or in the Taiwan Strait. It is currently unprepared – both psychologically and politically – to offer the level of military support to the United States that the American public and Congress would consider minimally acceptable.<sup>24</sup>

Japan's unwillingness to commit to large-scale military involvement in a Taiwan conflict is cause for concern. More importantly, for three critical reasons - Japanese public opinion, the regional memory of Japanese militarism, and escalation into an Asian war - U.S. planning should seek to limit Japan's involvement.

#### **Japanese Public Opinion**

On paper, JSDF units could offer significant military capability to assist U.S. forces. The reality is not as clear-cut. Japan has made progress toward becoming a "normal nation" with respect to defense and global security, but Japanese public opinion remains a stumbling block. Although Prime Minister Koizumi has indicated a desire for greater Japanese involvement in global security, a large segment of the Japanese public remains committed to

pacifism and is opposed to the employment of Japanese forces for purposes other than the defense of the homeland. Protests directed against the overseas deployment of Japanese forces, as well as against U.S. forces based in Japan, are frequent. This is especially true in Okinawa, which both hosts a preponderance of U.S. forces within Japan and contains bases geographically and logistically critical to operations in support of Taiwan.<sup>25</sup>

Under this domestic pressure, the Japanese government often agonizes over its involvement in overseas security operations, citing its constitutional renunciation of war as a reason for limiting the level of its cooperation. Japanese vacillation was highlighted during both Gulf Wars and is evident in U.S.-Japanese cooperation with regard to Taiwan. For example, the Japanese government recently announced that it would limit TBMD cooperation with the U.S., focusing only against missiles aimed at Japan.<sup>26</sup> A Japanese TBMD system with regional capabilities could provide an obvious and significant defensive advantage to U.S. and Taiwanese forces involved in a cross-strait conflict.

A U.S. demand for full Japanese military involvement in the defense of Taiwan could backfire and precipitate the further alienation of Japanese public opinion. This could in turn impede the Japanese Government's efforts at global engagement. Thus, the operational advantages gained by Japanese military support for Taiwan could preclude the JSDF from assisting in other regions around the globe. The unintended consequence of this is that the JSDF is prevented from contributing in precisely the regions where it would have the most positive impact, for Japanese military involvement within the East Asian region carries negative connotations that would not be exported to other areas of the globe.

## The Memory of Japanese Militarism

To say that relations between East Asian countries are complex is a significant understatement. Of the myriad political, economic, military, cultural, and historic factors underpinning intra-regional relations, the bitter and vivid memory of Japanese militarism harbored by many East Asian nations stands out.<sup>27</sup> China itself offers an example: despite the increasing economic interdependency between the two nations, numerous and recent displays of anti-Japanese sentiment within China indicate that powerful memories of the harsh Japanese occupation still remain.<sup>28</sup>

As previously discussed, the advanced technology and combat power of the JSDF are significant and the U.S. has sought and encouraged their involvement in various global security operations. U.S. planning should consider carefully, however, the ramifications of JSDF use in the defense of Taiwan. Japan's East Asian neighbors are less enthusiastic about Japanese motives and power. Within the region, any expansion of Japanese military power, especially efforts to expand offensive capabilities such as the recent JASDF move to acquire a new air-to-air refueling capability, will likely be viewed with concern and some consternation.<sup>29</sup> As a result, what the U.S. envisions as the expanding role of a global partner could be perceived by Asian nations as a resurgent Japan in the process of abandoning pacifism and embarked on a quest for regional power.

The resulting insecurity and regional instability could negatively impact U.S. influence, perhaps causing Asian nations to look elsewhere for security partners. Although the U.S. enjoys worldwide status as the only remaining superpower, Asian nations have other options for regional security. Since the late 1990s, multilateral Chinese diplomacy has sought to both isolate Taiwan and increase China's standing within Asia through economic

and political means.<sup>30</sup> Although U.S. influence is still strong, economic and political interdependence is growing between East Asian nations. If there is any doubt within the region regarding U.S. intentions and commitment, there is the chance that Asian nations could turn to China as a more reliable security partner.

The current U.S. standing among East Asian nations is generally good.<sup>31</sup> However, if the U.S. is seen as encouraging JSDF involvement in Asia in other than a self-defense capacity, it may be trading a short-term operational advantage for longer-term theater-strategic instability. The historical catalyst that ended 19<sup>th</sup> century Japanese isolationism and began her quest for empire was the threat posed by diplomatic and military interference from Western powers.<sup>32</sup> U.S. efforts to involve Japan in an extraterritorial dispute in Asia could be interpreted by Asian nations as history repeating itself.

Though more active Japanese diplomatic and military involvement in maintaining international peace and stability around the globe is a worthwhile U.S. goal, the East Asian region is probably not yet ready for full-scale Japanese military intervention. While the Taiwan dispute does indirectly threaten Japan by potentially interrupting her sea lines of communication, there is no direct threat to her territory or people. Japanese military involvement in the Taiwan dispute, especially if it is sought and welcomed by the U.S., could be counter-productive to both stability and U.S. standing within the region.

#### Escalation into an Asian War

With the notable exception of the Taiwan dispute, China's foreign policy for East Asia is pragmatic, and in many respects mirrors U.S. interests. Both nations desire economic stability, which fosters economic growth and allows them to focus on domestic problems. China in particular has demonstrated the desire for a "peaceful rise" of her influence within

Asia.<sup>33</sup> It is clear that China and her neighbors in the region recognize the significant benefits of economic cooperation.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the Chinese Government has consistently maintained that the Taiwan dispute is an internal problem. For these reasons, it is likely that China would not wish to escalate operations against Taiwan into a regional war. The involvement of Japanese forces in Taiwan's defense, however, could leave China little choice but to escalate the conflict into Japan.

At the same time, the Taiwan dispute places Japan in a difficult position. On the one hand Japan is eager for greater economic cooperation with China and its burgeoning markets, on the other it wishes to maintain the alliance with the U.S. that continues to ensure its safety in the face of regional threats such as North Korea.<sup>35</sup> Not surprisingly, Japan views China as its "biggest political and economic challenge."<sup>36</sup> There are also ancillary issues, such as the three-way dispute over the Senkaku Islands, which confound Japanese relations with both Taiwan and China.<sup>37</sup>

Japan's conflicting desires to engage China, cooperate with the U.S. and at the same time satisfy pacifist public opinion are reasons why it often equivocates on its foreign policy. A Taiwanese crisis would push this conflict to the breaking point. If the U.S. demands or expects Japanese military assistance vis-à-vis Taiwan, it will create a political catch-22 that must either destroy the U.S.-Japan alliance, or place the Japanese in a direct confrontation with China.

Neither option produces attractive results. With the first, the U.S. would cast adrift a longtime ally, sacrifice influence within the region and perhaps initiate a new East Asian arms race; with the second, a Taiwan-China conflict could escalate into a regional war.<sup>38</sup> In



both cases, stability in Asia is threatened and U.S. relations with Asian countries are adversely affected.

#### IV. Solutions: Optimizing US Readiness

Japanese support will be a crucial element of U.S. operations to defend Taiwan. The case is strong, however, for limiting that support to a level that provides operational benefits without sacrificing strategic interests. Planning for Taiwan Strait operations should seek to optimize U.S. strengths without making the success of the operation dependent on an excessive level of Japanese support. There are three available courses of action - maintaining current U.S. forces in Japan, establishing alternate forward bases, and maximizing maritime combat capabilities - that could mitigate the limited nature of Japanese support.

*Maintain U.S. Force Presence in Japan.* Limiting Japanese involvement vis-à-vis Taiwan places a premium on the requirement to maintain the U.S. forward presence within Japan. U.S. forces in Japan will continue to play an important and multifaceted role in East Asia. The U.S. presence will remain a critical element of crisis response not only for Taiwan but for the entire region, and U.S. forces will promote regional stability by allaying historical fears of Japanese hegemony and reaffirming the U.S. commitment to regional security.

Should Japan's U.S. security umbrella shrink or disappear, it would be forced to reassess its relationships with China and the Koreans. Japanese reactions could include expanding the reach and power of the JSDF's conventional offensive military capability, the development of nuclear weapons, or perhaps courting China as regional ally - courses of action consistently incongruent with U.S. interests.<sup>39</sup> Every effort should be made to maintain current U.S. force levels in Japan.

Public opinion within Japan will make this task a continuing challenge. With the current restructuring of U.S. forward presence, there appears to be little chance of moving significant additional forces to Japan. A looming challenge will be maintaining the striking power of the FDNF, currently centered on the conventionally-powered aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. As the last conventional aircraft carriers are retired around 2015, Japan must agree to the basing of a nuclear carrier on its soil, currently prohibited by Japanese law. Achieving Japanese acquiescence to the basing of a nuclear-powered carrier should be a centerpiece of U.S. diplomacy.

*Establish Alternative Forward Bases.* As important as they are, U.S. forces in Japan will not be enough to counter a massive Chinese assault on Taiwan. With the exception of Okinawa, most bases are too far away to efficiently support tactical aircraft. Additional forward basing options must be explored.

One possible remedy is already being implemented, as U.S. attack submarines and Air Force bomber units move to their new bases in Guam. Guam also possesses facilities that could potentially support the basing of an aircraft carrier. The USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) made several extended pierside visits to Guam's Apra Harbor during her 2003 deployment. However, since it is located 1,400 nautical miles from Taiwan, Guam is not an efficient base for shorter-range assets.<sup>40</sup>

Another potential basing option could lie in the Philippines. Forces based in Luzon would be within 500 nautical miles of the Taiwan Strait, multiplying U.S. options for power projection. U.S. forces have not been based in the Philippines in well over a decade; however, joint military exercises, recent U.S. assistance to the Philippine military against the Abu Sayyaf terrorist organization, and deployments of U.S. Marines to assist in typhoon

relief efforts are examples of recent U.S. gestures that could eventually provide the context for negotiating a renewed U.S. presence.<sup>41</sup>

*Maximize Maritime Combat Capabilities.* Basing options aside, maritime power will most likely remain the preeminent U.S. instrument for responding to a Taiwanese crisis. This point was amply demonstrated in 1996 by the deployment of two Carrier Strike Groups to the Taiwan Strait in response to provocative Chinese military exercises.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the ongoing emphasis on littoral power projection in areas such as the Arabian Gulf and Afghanistan, maritime commanders should not allow traditional sea control missions such as Anti-Surface Warfare (ASUW) and Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) to atrophy. These skills will be critical in confronting the burgeoning PRC naval threat. Mine Warfare (MIW) could also play a critical role in Taiwan's defense.

New deployment capabilities created by the recent implementation of the Fleet Response Plan (FRP) may allow greater capability to respond in the Taiwan area, and should be optimized towards this end. Furthermore, the Sea Basing initiative currently being evaluated may also provide a crucial capability to mitigate the challenges of Taiwanese defense.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The JSDF contains significant combat power and advanced capabilities. Japan's recent transition towards "normal nation" global engagement should make this force more available around the world to support global security and stability. For the foreseeable future, however, Japanese assistance in the defense of Taiwan could prove counterproductive to U.S. interests within East Asia unless a careful cost-benefit analysis is conducted and

Japan's assistance is correspondingly "scaled" to address the threat without compromising national interests in the region.

There is no guarantee that Japanese public opinion would currently support extensive involvement in combat operations for purposes other than self-defense. Such operations could thus prove damaging to U.S.-Japan relations. Extensive Japanese military involvement could also significantly raise the risk of conflict escalation. Planners should carefully consider various methods of JSDF employment, and forego its involvement unless absolutely necessary.

In contrast, more transparent forms of Japanese support can offer significant additional capabilities to U.S. and Taiwanese forces with lower risk. Japanese assistance will bolster intelligence collection and analysis at all levels of warfare, and will offer indispensable basing and logistic support that might not significantly increase the chances of conflict escalation. U.S. planning for Taiwanese defense should focus on maximizing the benefits of limited Japanese support, diversifying U.S. presence and influence throughout the region, and minimizing the chances of crisis escalation and destabilization. These goals will advance the achievement of national objectives with respect to Taiwan, and in the East Asian region as a whole.

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